

REMARKS

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the careful consideration given to this application. Reconsideration is now respectfully requested in view of the amendment above and the following remarks.

Claims 1-4, 6-15, 17-23 and 25-31 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 15 and 30 are independent claims. Claim 1 is amended, New Claim 31 is added. Claim 5 is cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer, and Claims 16 and 24 were previously cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Reconsideration and allowance of the present application are respectfully requested.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant notes with appreciation the Examiner's indication that Claims 15, 17-23 and 30 are allowed and that Claim 5 contains allowable subject matter.

Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112

Claim 1 stands rejected under 35 USC §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Applicant has amended Claim 1 to address the issue raised in the Office Action. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejection of Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. §112 be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1-4, 6-12, 14 and 25-29 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0092218 to Black (hereinafter "Black") in view of German Patent No. 4209105 to Heister (hereinafter "Heister"). Claim 13 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Black in view of Heister, and U.S. Patent No. 5,601,907 to Matsumoto (hereinafter "Matsumoto").

While disagreeing with these rejections, Applicant has opted to amend Claim 1 to incorporate the subject matter of Claim 5 (now cancelled), which was indicated as containing allowable subject matter. For at least this reason, Claim 1 and all of its dependent claims contain allowable subject matter.

Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests that the rejections of Claims 1-4, 6-14, and 25-29 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 be withdrawn.

New Claim

New Claim 31 has been added. Claim 31 depends from Claim 6 and is supported at least at page 3 of the specification and in the claims as originally filed in this application.

Disclaimer

Applicant may not have presented all possible arguments or have refuted the characterizations of either the claims or the prior art as found in the Office Action. However, the lack of such arguments or refutations is not intended to act as a waiver of such arguments or as concurrence with such characterizations.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above, consideration and allowance are respectfully solicited.

In the event the Examiner believes an interview might serve in any way to advance the prosecution of this application, the undersigned is available at the telephone number noted below.

The Office is authorized to charge any necessary fees to Deposit Account No. 22-0185.

Applicant believes no fee is due with this response other than such fees as may be indicated in an accompanying paper. However, if a fee is due (including if such paper is inadvertently omitted), please charge our Deposit Account No. 22-0185, under Order No. 22407-00040-US, from which the undersigned is authorized to draw. Should any extension of time be needed, such extension of time is hereby requested.

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Respectfully submitted,

Electronic signature: /Jeffrey W. Gluck/
Jeffrey W. Gluck
Registration No.: 44,457
CONNOLLY BOVE LODGE & HUTZ LLP
1875 Eye Street, NW
Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 331-7111
(202) 572-0322 (Direct Dial)
(202) 293-6229 (Fax)
Attorney for Applicant